

Fire Safety Advice: Retail Facility Managers



Fire can have a devastating effect and poses a serious risk to the safety and welfare of building occupants. For retailers, fire can cause expensive damage to property, equipment and stock, and may result in lengthy and expensive downtime while repairs and rebuilding take place.

To help retail facility managers protect against fire, Wormald offers the following advice:

1. Conduct a fire safety audit to highlight potential fire risks around the store or facility.

This will help to determine the fire protection solution required.

- Hazards will vary depending on the store but can include electrical equipment, kitchen or heating appliances, flammable liquids, aerosols, and combustible waste material. Consulting a fire protection specialist can help to ensure all hazards are identified and the most appropriate fire protection solution is installed.

2. Keep up to date with regulation and legislation.

Retail managers must know their responsibilities when it comes to ethical and legal fire safety requirements. Australian legislation and standards relating to fire safety change regularly so it's important to stay on top of things.

- Keep up to date on all national and state-based fire safety regulations and standards in relation to fire protection equipment, maintenance or training. It's a good idea to contact a fire protection specialist.
- Develop a fire prevention plan in accordance with *Australian Standard AS3745-2010 - Planning for emergencies in facilities*.

3. Install adequate fire protection equipment.

Fire protection equipment can include basic fire extinguishers or fire hose reels, passive fire solutions such as fire doors or more advanced fire detection and suppression systems. When deciding on the most suitable fire protection solution, considerations include:

- Legislation and standards
- Size and type of building
- Materials being handled on the premises

4. Service and maintain.

A high level of reliability is essential when it comes to fire protection. Fire protection systems and equipment should always perform to the standard to which they were originally designed and installed.

- Regular testing can validate the functionality of the systems and equipment and help uncover any faults or issues that may cause malfunction.
- *Australian Standard AS1851-2012 - Routine service of fire protection systems and equipment* recommends that fire protection systems be regularly inspected.

5. Provide appropriate signage for all hazards, fire protection equipment and emergency exits.

- Fire extinguishers and other fire safety equipment should be clearly marked.
- Emergency exit signs should be visible so that in the event of an evacuation, all building occupants, including less mobile residents, can be directed to escape quickly.

6. Train.

A confident team that is able to respond appropriately in the event of a fire is an invaluable investment and can substantially reduce the impact of a crisis.

- Staff should know how to respond to a fire emergency and how to use the fire equipment onsite. This includes casual and temporary retail staff.
- Fire safety training can be included in staff induction where new employees are briefed and trained on what to do in the event of a fire.
- Fire wardens should be fully trained on their responsibilities, fire equipment and the emergency warning and communication systems in their premises.



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